

**Hon. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen**  
**Opening Statement**  
**Foreign Affairs Committee Hearing**  
**“Turkey’s Foreign Policy and Implications for US-Turkey Relations”**  
**Wednesday, July 28<sup>th</sup>, 2010**

Since the days of the Truman Doctrine in the late 1940s, the U.S. and Turkey have had a strong relationship that has served both countries’ interests.

This is not to say that there have not been serious disagreements. We have long called on Turkey to end its illegal occupation of the northern portion of Cyprus and to implement more appropriate policies toward the Greek Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarchate in Istanbul.

Still, there continue to be areas in which our two countries reap significant benefits from the relationship.

- Although the Soviet Union is long gone, as a NATO ally, Turkey still has a U.S. guarantee of support if it is threatened militarily.
- As part of NATO, Turkey has the opportunity to participate with the U.S. and other member-states in the area of missile defense.
- As Turkey’s ally, the U.S. in turn, is allowed to use Turkey’s Incirlik air base to support the military operation in Afghanistan — and has Turkey’s active support in that operation.
- Both countries also actively cooperate with each other in fighting extremism – and that is extremely important, because both of our nations have been the targets of horrible attacks and continue to face the threat of future, very serious attacks.
- The U.S. and Turkey are significant partners in trade and commerce, which is obviously an important fact in this time of increasing global economic uncertainty.

This hearing today, however, reflects the fact that we may be at a turning point in U.S.-Turkish relations.

The policy disagreements that have emerged in recent years pose serious challenges to the bilateral relationship.

These include:

- Turkey’s opposition to the sanctions on Iran that have been sought by the U.S. and its other NATO allies in Europe.

- Turkey's move instead to rapidly increase its commercial relations with Iran. – I note in this regard that, just this week, it was reported that Turkey and Iran have signed a new agreement on a natural gas pipeline from Iran to Turkey, in defiance of U.S.-led efforts to cut off energy investments, development and trade with Iran.
- The Turkish government's provocation in supporting the May 31<sup>st</sup> violation of the naval blockade on shipments to the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip – Turkish authorities then encouraged efforts at the United Nations to demonize and condemn our democratic ally, Israel.
- The current Turkish government's verbal attacks on Israel and the Turkish government's support for Hamas, which is designated by the U.S. as a terrorist organization.

No country has a foreign policy that is completely divorced from its domestic political affairs, and Turkey's ongoing, internal changes and their impact on its foreign policy are no exception to that rule.

The relationship between Turkey's internal developments and its foreign policy is, in fact, a subject of debate that makes this hearing today very timely.

Everyone seems to agree that this is “not your grandfather's Turkey anymore.”

But the fundamental question for Turkey's future foreign policy is: How great a change in Turkey's internal, political governance and social and cultural practices does the current Turkish Government intend to seek?

The majority “Justice and Development” – or “A.K.P.” – Party in Turkey is clearly an Islamic party.

What is now being debated is how far it will try to go in breaking down the separation of state and religion that has been the hallmark of Turkish governance since Mustafa Kemal “Ataturk” ended the Islamic Caliphate in Turkey in the 1920s.

The ability of the Turkish military – a bastion of secularism – to fend off the rise of dedicated Islamists within its officer corps appears to be weakening.

The manner in which the current Turkish Government has conducted its investigation into an alleged military plot to incite a coup, has reportedly involved questionable tactics, including extensive wiretapping, alleged illegalities in the collection of evidence and lengthy indictments.

There have been serious allegations of pressure by the current government on media organizations that do not support its policies.

The government-proposed constitutional reforms, if adopted, would appear to greatly increase its control over the Turkish judiciary – another traditional bastion of secularism.

In fact, some observers suspect that the Turkish Prime Minister may be following the pattern of the current Russian Prime Minister in the past decade --- that is, steadily putting in place the building blocks for an authoritarian regime that would perpetuate the A.K.P.'s hold on power.

Is the A.K.P. Government seeking to be a more active party in Middle Eastern affairs? A more Islamic voice in world affairs? A stronger voice in global economic affairs in the G-20 group of nations? Or a partner with Russia, China, India and Brazil in the so-called "BRIC" group?

Ultimately, we need to ask: What does this mean for the U.S.-Turkish relationship?

In our Committee's hearing on trans-Atlantic security in March, I noted some concerns over the positions of several leading NATO allies in Europe in dealing with Russia's aggression and corruption, in contributing to the NATO operation in Afghanistan, and in sharing with the U.S. the costs of fighting Islamic militants and maintaining global stability.

I said this at that time, "Europe remains important to the United States, but our calls for support must not go unheeded."

I suggest that that applies to our relationship with Turkey today.